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COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Seventeenth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 42nd MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 27 November 1997, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. GRISSA

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS (agenda item 6)

(a) REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLES 16 AND 17 OF THE COVENANT (continued)

Second periodic report of Uruguay (E/1990/6/Add.10; E/C.12/1994/3; E/C.12/Q/URU/1; HR/CESCR/NONE/97/10)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Berthet, Ms. Rivero, Mr. Badi Nadruz, Mr. Strozzi and Mr. Lista (Uruguay) took places at the Committee table.

2. Mr. BERTHET (Uruguay) said that his Government fully shared the goals fostered by development and also the ideals set out in all international human rights instruments and made every effort to comply with the suggestions and recommendations of the relevant treaty bodies. The members of the delegation were directly responsible for many of the areas of concern under the Covenant and their presence attested to the importance the Government attached to the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights in Uruguay. He wished, however, to point out that the presentation of the report constituted a burden for developing countries, most of which were at a considerable remove from Geneva. In that regard, he recalled the conclusions and recommendations of the Vienna Declaration and Plan of Action, which recommended that measures should continue to be adopted to coordinate the various requirements of international human rights instruments and that the presentation of a single comprehensive report should be considered. Uruguay had benefited from the consideration of its initial report (E/1990/5/Add.7) and, as noted by various international organizations, had made considerable progress in fulfilling its obligations under the Covenant. The delegation looked forward to hearing the Committee's suggestions and remarks.

3. Mr. BADI NADRUZ (Uruguay) said that Uruguay had paid scrupulous attention to the Committee's observations and recommendations. In section B of the concluding observations (E/C.12/1994/3), the Committee had noted that certain rights guaranteed under the Covenant had been incorporated in Uruguayan legislation and in particular the Constitution. It was important to note that the instrument in question was the 1967 Constitution, which had recently been reformed. Section B also praised Uruguay for the progress made in providing free education. In fact, the Vareliana Reform of 1887 had established that education should be free, compulsory and secular. Those principles had been extended to university education in 1950 and the Government was currently considering the possibility of school enrolment at the age of four to five.

4. Paragraphs 5 and 11 of the concluding observations had referred to economic difficulties caused by the high rate of inflation. When the document had been drafted, in 1994, the rate of inflation had stood at 40 per cent, but it had since dropped to 16 per cent. The Government's goal was to achieve a single-digit annual rate of inflation.

5. Paragraph 8 had requested information on the distribution of free school meals. By long tradition, the Uruguayan system had provided a school lunch programme. An NGO, working in cooperation with school authorities and the school nourishment programme, was now providing tray-lunches, similar to those offered on airlines, to 120,000 students, out of a school population of 375,000. If the Committee wished, the delegation could provide detailed information.

6. Paragraph 12 had expressed concern about education for minority groups in Uruguay. The Government had assessed the educational system for children and could confirm that no minority groups were barred from access to education. The latest data circulated to members described the current educational reform, which was based on the principle of "equality with quality". Any further clarifications would, of course, be provided. The Government had looked into the matter of teacher salaries and conflictual relations between teachers and the State, raised in paragraph 13. Considerable progress had been made, details of which would be given in due course. For education programmes to be successful, teaching staff must have a sense of personal dignity and professional satisfaction. Recognizing that the achievement of educational goals depended on respect for human rights, especially the rights of the child, Uruguay counted education among its highest priorities.

7. Mr. STROZZI (Uruguay) said his Government had closely studied the recommendation that health-care services should be expanded in rural areas, and relevant agreements had been drawn up between the Ministry of Public Health and private medical institutions. In regard to mother and child care, he had circulated to the members a report containing information on the impact of recent medical programmes on the infant mortality rate, which had dropped from 17.5 per cent in 1996 to 16.2 per cent in 1997 and was continuing to decline.

8. He had also circulated information on Uruguay's AIDS/HIV programme, which showed that in the first half of 1997 the incidence of death from AIDS was 50 per cent lower than it had been during the same period in 1996 and that the spread of the illness had slowed down.

9. Uruguay was in the process of changing its mental health programme from a hospital-based to a community-based treatment model. In 1990, with the cooperation of the Faculty of Medicine, a pilot project had launched a network of community clinics to provide direct treatment to mental health patients, with excellent results. That treatment model now formed the basis for mental-health planning and was being vigorously developed.

10. Mr. LISTA (Uruguay) said that the report discussed recent economic developments, the restoration of democracy, civil rights and trade union freedoms, and the general improvement in the quality of life for the people of Uruguay. It also described measures to reduce unemployment levels, among them the creation of the National Employment Directorate and the National Employment Council, which were responsible for designing and implementing employment and manpower retraining policy and for administering a fund for that purpose.

11. Within that framework, various projects had been undertaken, most of which postdated the second periodic report: the creation of a labour market monitoring system; the reform of the manpower retraining programme for workers with unemployment insurance, which included broadening the number of beneficiaries and improving procedures; implementation of the training and job-placement programme for young people; the draft law on job creation for the young, recently adopted by the Uruguayan Parliament; the training programme for rural workers; the programme for the promotion of small- and medium-size enterprises; remedial job training; and various programmes designed to provide opportunities for women and other groups.

General framework within which the Covenant is implemented

12. Mr. RIEDEL, responding to Uruguay's written replies (HR/CESCR/NONE/97) to the list of issues, said that in paragraph 1 the Committee was primarily interested in examples of case law in which provisions of the Covenant had been invoked in the Uruguayan courts. In paragraph 3, the Committee simply wished to know the Government's views on the establishment of an optional protocol, and, in particular, which of the various existing proposals it preferred.

13. Mr. SADI, supporting Mr. Riedel, said that examples of case law would allow the Committee to determine the status of the implementation of the Covenant in the Uruguayan legal system. In its reply to paragraph 3, the Government had simply stated that the optional protocol should be realistically formulated. He wondered if that suggested that the Covenant itself was unrealistic. The Committee worked on the understanding that countries would fulfill their obligations in accordance with their abilities, in other words, that in good faith they would begin the process of achieving the fulfilment of those obligations.

14. Mr. TEXIER said that he was puzzled by the reference in paragraph 9 of Uruguay's written replies to the need to proceed cautiously with regard to the optional protocol, since the delegation had also provided the Committee with a compilation of case law of a labour relations court of Montevideo and of the Supreme Court, thereby confirming that many of the rights set out in the Covenant already had the force of law. As for the Protocol of San José, mentioned in that same paragraph, he asked whether the ratification process had been completed or whether a parliamentary act was needed before it could be applied.

15. Paragraph 8 of the replies indicated that there had been an exchange with an NGO, Service, Peace and Justice in Latin America. Would the dialogue continue in the future and would the Committee's conclusions serve as a useful instrument in that regard?

16. Mr. ADEKUOYE commended the delegation for its specific references to some of the observations and recommendations made earlier by the Committee. He would like to know how NGOs participated in drafting the report, because he could see no evidence of any such input.

17. Mrs. JIMENEZ BUTRAGUEÑO asked whether the Government intended to publicize the Committee's report and concluding observations. She would have liked to see a stronger presence of NGOs.

18. Mr. CEVILLE asked what was meant in paragraph 9 of the replies by the statement that the protocol should be realistically formulated and should recognize the problems faced by the majority of less developed countries in the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights. Was that said in support of the optional protocol, or was it criticism?

19. Mr. BERTHET (Uruguay), thanking members for their kind words, said that the delegation would do its best to provide them specific examples and, if necessary, would submit additional material at a later date.

20. On the question of publicizing and disseminating human rights issues, he said that a mere reading of Uruguay's press demonstrated the great importance attached to the subject. The Parliament had always taken a favourable stance on the defence of human rights too, and there was broad consensus on the matter throughout the country.

21. With reference to Mrs. Jimenez Butragueño's question NGOs had, in fact, been consulted during the drafting of the report. NGO involvement in the issues of the day was increasing in Uruguay. For example, as indicated in the report by Mr. Badi Nadruz on education, one NGO was working hand in hand with the Government on a school food programme. The question about the optional protocol would be answered later.

22. In the matter of inflation, he would remind the members that, instead of relying on shock therapy, Uruguay had fought that scourge by adopting a gradualist approach so as to diminish the suffering among the population. Its policy, launched in 1985, had enabled the country to rein in the inflation rate to 16 per cent in 1997. The goal for 1998 was under 10 per cent and, by the year 2000, a rate on a par with that of countries with the lowest inflation in the world.

23. Needless to say, the Committee's conclusions would be taken into account. Uruguay had a long tradition of complying with its obligations under international instruments and he pointed out that international law was directly applicable by the judiciary in his country. Hence, there was no need for a procedure to incorporate the Covenant in domestic law.

Article 2. Non-discrimination

24. Mr. SADI, noting that Uruguay's replies in respect of non-discrimination confined themselves to Blacks and Whites, asked about Uruguay's other ethnic groups.

25. Mr. BERTHET (Uruguay) said that there was not and never had been any discrimination in Uruguay, which was fortunate enough to have experienced discriminatory legislation the way certain other countries had, including, as everyone knew, some very important ones. Uruguay was privileged in that it had no discrimination against minorities or racial problems. If the report referred to the black race, it was because there were virtually no other

minority races. There was an ethnic minority group of the black race, whose members enjoyed the same rights and were in the same situation as all inhabitants. Sometimes, owing to social circumstances, the progress of that community was not as fast as that of other sectors of the population, but that did not involve any discrimination whatsoever. No reference had been made to other races for the simple reason that there were virtually none in Uruguay.

26. Mr. AHMED said that he would like to have the delegation's reaction to the 1997 United States Department of State report, according to which discrimination against the black minority posed problems.

27. Mr. PILLAY noted that, according to the same report, three quarters of the persons interviewed in Uruguay had admitted that racial prejudice existed, and two thirds of them had named Blacks as the groups that faced most discrimination. He did not see the purpose of the delegation's coming before the Committee and contending that discrimination did not exist in Uruguay at all. Mr. Sadi's point was well-taken: there must be other racial groups. If the majority population was white, and 6 per cent of the population was of black origin, what about mixed races? Surely, if the Blacks faced discrimination, persons of mixed race did too.

28. Mr. SADI said that the Committee must be careful about reports by Governments on other Governments, which did not necessarily contain the gospel truth. In his view, the Committee should not attach so much importance to such reports.

29. Mr. TEXIER said that, personally, he had always refrained from using information from the United States Department of State because, although the United States was the most powerful country and wanted to rule the United Nations, he did not see what gave it the right to produce reports on the human rights situation in the rest of the world and, as it had not ratified the Covenant, it was not exactly in a position to give anyone lessons on economic, social and cultural rights. The reports of the United States Department of State were, by definition biased.

30. Mr. AHMED said that he was not levelling any accusations against Uruguay. On the contrary, he wanted to give the delegation an opportunity to respond to comments so as to throw light on the situation.

31. Mr. BERTHET (Uruguay) said he was not sure that he should address the subject, since there did not seem to be a consensus among members on whether it should be considered.

32. The CHAIRPERSON said that, if a member of the Committee asked a question, he or she was entitled to an answer, even if other members disagreed with the question.

33. Mr. BERTHET (Uruguay) said that that was precisely what he was preparing to do, despite the absence of a consensus. Uruguay had nothing to hide. All he wanted to say was that the report in question had been rejected by the Government of Uruguay. The report's conclusions, which were totally unacceptable, had been the subject of a very detailed reply to the United States by his Government.

34. Mr. ADEKUOYE said that, according to Uruguay's replies, there were no social and economic indicators with a breakdown by race, and the Blacks themselves had specifically asked for statistics to reflect the fact of race. There must be a reason for that. Many parts of the replies suggested that certain groups of people were not receiving adequate attention. Perhaps the absence of statistics on race was due to a lack of official awareness of the problem. He, too, would like the delegation to comment on the assertion to which Mr. Pillay had referred.

35. Mr. WIMER said that, as a foreigner who had lived in Uruguay for some time, he was willing to believe the delegation when it claimed there was no discrimination. Uruguay was a country of immigrants and, in his experience, he had never seen any evidence of racial discrimination.

36. The people of African origin formed a small group, representing 5 per cent of the population at most. Admittedly, the black population were among the poorest of social groups and lived in ghettos, and there was no real mixing of persons of African and of European origin. It was disturbing that the black population continued to be marginalized in social and economic terms. The real issue was whether Uruguayan society, which, apart from the years of dictatorship, had been a model of democracy in Latin America and had produced brilliant jurists, poets and other intellectuals, had not attended to the needs of its minority population. Had the Government adopted measures or formulated programmes and objectives to improve the socio-economic situation of the black population?

37. Mr. TEXIER said that the Constitution and laws of Uruguay contained ample provisions to combat racial discrimination and the State itself did not promote discriminatory policies. However, as was often the case, despite legislation, public sentiment reflected a number of racial prejudices. He therefore wondered whether the Government intended to launch an educational campaign to fight those prejudices or to establish a balance which would ensure greater representation of all groups in positions of influence.

38. Mr. KOUSNETSOV drew the attention of the delegation to the fact that the members of the Committee were in possession of a country analysis of Uruguay which contained a recommendation, made in 1993 by the United Nations Human Rights Committee, that special measures should be taken to protect minorities, as provided under article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. He would like to know what measures had been adopted in response to that recommendation.

39. Mrs. BONOAN-DANDAN suggested that the delegation was well intentioned in stating that there was no racial discrimination against women. It was easy to forget that discrimination against women went beyond questions of equality. More often, women suffered discrimination in their capacity as women and not necessarily in comparison with men.

40. She commended the delegation on the impressive amount of detail and historical background from paragraph 22 onwards of the written replies to issues relating to article 3 of the Covenant and noted the legislative achievements and other examples of progress in the elimination of discrimination against women. Paragraph 42 said it had been difficult to

measure the impact of the mechanisms established to eliminate the remaining causes of such discrimination. She would like more information on precisely what difficulties had been encountered and what obstacles remained in connection with traditional practices.

41. Mr. CEAUSU said that, in considering the issue of racial discrimination, the Committee was working on the basis of data received in the information provided by the Government in its reports and replies to the list of issues, and from reports received from a variety of sources. In his opinion, a number of the Government's replies confirmed the notion that a problem did exist in connection with the treatment of the black minority.

42. More specifically paragraphs 19 and 20 showed that, although the black population sought inclusion as an ethnic group in official reports, the National Statistics Institute considered that the amount of data available at present was too small to permit calculation of valid indicators for that population group. The obligations of States parties under the Covenant were the responsibility of Governments and the Committee should not be given any excuses for the lack of statistical data on the situation of a national minority.

43. As a matter of principle, the Government should take up the issues relating to its black minority and all guarantees and provisions under international instruments should be respected, enabling people to be recognized as national minorities. It should not hesitate to adopt the requisite measures to ensure that the situation was adequately reflected in official statistical data.

44. Mrs. JIMENEZ BUTRAGUEÑO expressed surprise and concern at the absence of a section dealing with article 3 in the periodic report. Although the replies were on the whole satisfactory, some areas of doubt still remained.

45. She would like a further explanation of the information in paragraph 35 of the written replies, which stated that, under Decree No. 37 against sexual discrimination, restricting employment to one sex, where essential to the activities or responsibilities of a given job or required by certain international labour agreements, was not discriminatory. Which activities were women excluded from in Uruguay? She also asked for a response to paragraph 9, on the adoption of measures to increase the number of women in posts of responsibility in both the private and public sectors.

46. The CHAIRPERSON pointed out that there were no data on the proportion of the black population in schools and institutions of higher learning. As long as the Committee did not receive information directly from the Government, it had to rely on other sources.

47. Mr. BERTHET (Uruguay) said that his Government regarded racial and sexual discrimination as extremely important issues.

48. There were highly-placed professional women active in all spheres of Uruguayan life. The 1946 Civil Rights of Women Act had recognized full civil equality at a time when many countries, including countries in Europe, had not considered acknowledging such rights. Admittedly, women obviously had more

problems than men in such situations because they played a dual role as professionals and mothers, but those difficulties should not be construed as evidence of discrimination.

49. As for the reference to persons of mixed race, Uruguayan mulattos were entirely assimilated into society and hence they were not a separate ethnic group. No problem arose in that regard. As far as the black population was concerned, he would refer to paragraphs 14 et seq. of the written replies and point out that the Government had been in close collaboration with the NGO, Mundo Afro, to look into the question of introducing a module on race into the regular statistical household surveys. A memorandum of understanding had been concluded between the Government and the NGO in that regard. The black population experienced difficulty in joining Uruguayan society and in participating in the country's economic and social progress. The Government recognized the importance of collaborating with the NGO in facilitating the integration of the black population. It was now in the process of preparing its report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and a copy would be made available in due course.

50. Mr. BADI NADRUZ (Uruguay) stressed that the reason for not including a separate group of statistics on black Uruguayans was that the Government had never wished to single out any population group in terms of skin colour, origin or other characteristics. Under article 8 of the Constitution, all persons were equal before the law and the sole distinction to be made was on the basis of skills and capabilities. Emphasizing that all citizens in Uruguay enjoyed the same rights, he took great pride in the fact that the present population of Uruguayans came from diverse backgrounds and engaged in their occupations without the slightest discrimination whatsoever. Education was essential for sustained personal growth in the future and so Uruguay had placed much emphasis on granting all citizens equal access to all levels of schooling and on ensuring that no limitations were placed on people of a different colour or foreigners.

51. Mr. LISTA (Uruguay) pointed out that the Uruguayan Minister of Labour was a woman. The Civil Rights of Women Act in 1945 had incorporated the rights of married women, whereas the rights of women in general had been established much earlier, under the Civil Code.

52. Paragraph 31 of the written replies spoke of "Act No. 10,045" - a typographical error for "Act No. 16,045", an Act that provided redress for persons who were victims of sexual discrimination, who could refer to the Labour Police, a department under the General Inspectorate of Labour and Social Security which dealt exclusively with violations of employment regulations. He would point out in connection to Mrs. Jimenez Butragueño's question that there might be tasks requiring extraordinary physical effort which would be unsuitable for women, but in principle women had access to all jobs.

53. Mr. BERTHET (Uruguay) said that article 3 had not been included in the periodic report under discussion because nothing had changed in respect of Uruguay's implementation of that article of the Covenant since the previous report.

54. Mr. CEVILLE asked what the percentage of women was in the labour force and what their average wages were in comparison with men.

55. Mrs. BONOAN-DANDAN said that her reason for asking about discrimination against women was that the written replies themselves had alluded to the fact that discrimination did in fact exist. Paragraph 29 specifically stated that areas of discrimination remained with respect to women, particularly under-representation in top political posts and in job discrimination.

56. She could not fail to reiterate her earlier comment that discrimination was not limited to questions of equality. She was unwilling to believe that women did not suffer discrimination in Uruguay, as the problem affected even the most modern societies. The fact that women did not complain publicly did not in any way mean they were not suffering from discrimination. The very affirmation that women had a harder task in their roles as professionals and homemakers was in itself discriminatory and it was not enough to list the high-level jobs held by some women. She would like the more specific problems facing women, beyond their role as housekeepers, to be explored so as to examine their broader role in society and to see whether traditional practices discriminated against them.

57. Mr. ADEKUOYE, referring to paragraphs 18 and 19 of the written replies, pointed to the acknowledgement that there was in fact a subtle relationship between race and social status. Even if legislation did require privileges to be based on merit, it was sometimes difficult for certain classes of people to achieve merit because of a bias in the social system. He therefore asked the delegation to explain the meaning of paragraph 18 (c) of the replies.

58. Furthermore, was the delegation aware that a survey had been conducted in February 1995 on attitudes towards race and that the persons surveyed had admitted the existence of racial discrimination, stating by a two-thirds majority that the black population was the social group most affected?

59. Mr. LISTA (Uruguay) said employment statistics for the period between May and July 1997 showed that the rate of unemployment was 10.4 per cent for men, as opposed to 14.3 per cent for women. He wished to stress that, under labour legislation, the highest protection was afforded against dismissal of pregnant women. With regard to Mr. Ceville's question on the participation of women in the labour market, 56.4 per cent of the economically active population were men and 43.6 per cent were women.

60. Mr. AHMED said that figures on the incomes of men and women in Uruguay were provided by the publication "Social Watch: Uruguay Poverty Decreases but Insatisfaction Grows", which noted that, in 1994, women's incomes had on average been 60 per cent less than men's. Such inequality was more marked in the private sector, especially for women in the professions, although among office workers, women's earnings were somewhat better than the average, at 68 per cent of men's.

Article 6. The right to work

61. Mr. ANTANOVICH said that, although the information from the various sources available to the Committee might not always be consistent, there was

no reasons to suppose that the Committee would not reach consensus on which data were clear and well substantiated. It would therefore be preferable for the delegation to provide actual figures than to dwell on discrepancies.

62. He asked what measures, legal or otherwise, were being taken to combat child labour, a problem to which Uruguay, like many countries, did not appear to be immune. Had any legal steps been taken, in conformity with the ILO Minimum Age Convention (No. 138), to raise the minimum age for entry into employment? Another means of delaying the entry of children into employment was to provide vocational education, which, because the acquisition of skills and knowledge took time, also gave the child a chance to mature. Self-employment, which appeared to be on the increase in Uruguay, often implied small businesses and family enterprises, which could be hidden users of child labour.

63. Mr. ADEKUOYE said the fact that many young people were emigrating from Uruguay, which also had a low birth rate, was an indication of an ageing population. Proof of that also lay in the fact that reform of the pensions system had been considered necessary. Were there any means whereby older people who might want to do so could continue in employment beyond the age of retirement, in order to increase the pool of available labour? Was there any discrimination against older people in employment?

64. Mr. SADI noted that in Uruguay a worker dismissed for misconduct was entitled to one month's wage for every year of work up to a maximum of six months' wages. Did those provisions still apply in the case of arbitrary dismissal or in the case of workers made redundant when a business or factory closed down?

65. With regard to the disabled, paragraph 80 of the written replies to the list of issues stated that 7 per cent of the population suffered from some form of disability and 70 per cent of them - in other words, 4 per cent of the population - were mentally disabled. He wondered whether there were any health or nutritional factors that might explain those figures, which seemed rather high.

66. Mr. ADEKUOYE asked whether any other groups of the population in addition to women were particularly affected by unemployment. Unemployment also appeared to be more sharply felt in the building sector than in other industries. Was there any reason why that should be so?

67. Mr. LISTA (Uruguay) said that, following Uruguay's ratification of ILO Convention No. 138, the minimum age for employment had been raised to 15. As an exception, children between 12 and 15 were permitted to work in family enterprises or with family members, or on light work such as delivering newspapers, but in both cases for no more than two hours a day.

68. Measures were being taken to combat the increase in child labour. Under an agreement with UNICEF, a study would be conducted of the present situation and the policies and strategies currently in force with a view to preparing a programme of specific activities to combat the practice.

69. Mr. BADI NADRUZ (Uruguay), referring to Mr. Antanovich's view that education was a means of preventing child labour, said that the goal of the educational reform process initiated in 1996 was to ensure universal access to elementary education - namely kindergarten, primary and early secondary education - which covered the ages at which child labour was a matter of concern. Another important aim was to provide schools that would take care of children throughout the day, so that mothers would have the opportunity to seek paid employment. Since the start of the reform, 20,000 children had been enrolled in elementary education. By March 1998, an additional 300 schools built would ensure virtually complete coverage of the 4 to 5 year-old age group. A further 141 schools and 300 full-time schools would be completed by the end of 1998. As for vocational education, in conjunction with the National Institute for Minors schools would give children some instruction in the workings of small enterprises, which would be further developed in secondary school. Special efforts were being made to extend coverage of rural areas.

70. Mr. LISTA (Uruguay) said that compensation for dismissal was set at certain minimum levels and depended on whether the worker concerned had been employed by the month or the day. In the first case the compensation was one month's wage, and in the second 25 days' pay for every year of work. The most common form of arbitrary dismissal was that intended to harm the worker, such as dismissal of a trade union activist or dismissal of a worker after a lifetime spent in an enterprise. Another form was indirect dismissal, when it was the worker who had left employment because working conditions or pay represented a violation of workers' rights.

71. As to the employment of disabled persons, since 1989 the legal obligation was that 4 per cent of vacant jobs must be reserved for them. The National Employment Directorate had, together with a non-governmental organization, set up a pilot programme covering about 500 people for the retraining of disabled workers. A national commission on the disabled was also engaged in many projects for their rehabilitation and retraining. Young people were the main group, in addition to women, affected by unemployment and the National Employment Council and the National Employment Directorate were engaged in a successful training and retraining project for the young.

72. Mr. STROZZI (Uruguay) said that the figures for the proportion of physically and mentally disabled in the population given in paragraph 80 of the written replies were comparable to those found in other countries throughout the world.

73. Mrs. JIMENEZ BUTRAGUEÑO, referring to Mr. Adekuoye's earlier question, asked whether any problems were experienced in the employment of older persons. Were there any projects to deal with persons approaching retirement age?

74. Mr. LISTA (Uruguay) said that the National Employment Directorate had a rehabilitation programme for older workers seeking employment, a programme under which each case was dealt with individually in order to place the person in suitable work or to ensure retraining where necessary.

75. Mr. RADI NADRUZ (Uruguay) said that, in all areas of education up to university level, teachers could continue to work after retirement age if they so wished, subject to a medical examination. It afforded an opportunity to earn a supplementary income if teachers were in receipt of a pension. In other cases, teachers did not receive their pension but were employed at the same salary level as before reaching retirement age. There was also an educational system for older persons, termed the university of the third age, where they could acquire new knowledge and new skills.

76. Mr. LISTA said that although, under the recent reform of the system the ordinary retirement age was 60, people were not necessarily compelled to stop working at that age. There were options to retire later and so acquire a greater retirement benefit. People above retirement age who had ceased work were not legally entitled to return to their previous employment because of the need to make jobs available for young people. Higher rates of unemployment than elsewhere prevailed in the construction industry from time to time as it was prone to fluctuations in the economic cycle.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.